1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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MUSICAL AND SIGNALING INSTRUMENTS

The music is chiefly instrumental; vocal music is seldom heard, and is chiefly performed by the sukya in practicing his incantations.

DRUM.—Our common drum, known by its English name (M.: *drum;* S.: *durum*), is the favorite musical instrument among the men; it has been extremely popular ever since its introduction by British garrisons during the eighteenth century. The Indians make it themselves and beat it at their drinking bouts with the aid of the wooden drumsticks (M.: *mihta;* S.: *tiñni*).

The horizontal hollowed-out log drum with an H-shaped cutting made longitudinally (the *teponatzli* of the Mexicans and the *tunkul* of the Maya), which is used for signaling purposes in different parts of America and Melanesia, appears to have been unknown in the region under consideration. The common drum is sometimes used to advise the neighbors of a misla feast.[a]

The upright native drum (M.: *kuñbi, kuñbaya;* S.: *pañtan, panatañ*) is goblet shaped and hollowed out from a solid block of mahogany or cedar; it has a height of about 3 feet at least, including the pedestal base, which is carved from the same block of wood. The smallest diameter is at the bottom just above the pedestal support. The drumhead at the top is formed by a piece of animal skin (deer, toad, iguana, or tapir); it is held taut by means of a strong rope which is attached to the pendent edges of the skin and firmly tied to the shell of the drum. It is beaten with the hand and used only at the festival of the dead. This instrument corresponds to the *huehuetl* of the ancient Mexicans.

RATTLES.—Round or egg-shaped gourd rattles, the common playthings of our babies, figure among the musical instruments of the Mosquito Coast, and are found in use all over the New World. They are handled chiefly by the women, particularly at the festivals of the dead, in order to mark the measure at the dances. These rattles are made from the fruits of the calabash tree, from which the pulpy contents have been removed through a circular opening at the stem; small stones, pebbles, hard seeds, or beans are then introduced. Finally, a close-fitting stick, which acts like a handle, is introduced; it tapers somewhat toward the distal end, which is thrust entirely

[a] The foreigners living on the Mosquito Coast jokingly use the phrase "bush telegraph" to refer to the rapid way in which news sometimes travels, but there is no such mysterious way used by the Indians. It is claimed that the Miskito living on the savanna near the sea occasionally spread news by the signal of making a savanna fire. But such a signal could not be very definite as these fires are generally kindled for no purpose but to burn the grass and low thicket. Sometimes men from villages far apart come within shouting distance of one another when hunting. It is also claimed that some men have a "whistling language," and are able to communicate any sentence correctly by whistling.

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534 through the shell, emerging through a small hole cut just opposite the stem end. With other specimens the handle does not pass through the calabash, but it is firmly attached to it by means of fiber strings passed through various perforations drilled in one end of the gourd. The seeds strike the inner wall of the thin shell and the central handle axis, resonating somewhat like castanets.

WIND INSTRUMENTS.—Flutes or flageolets (M.: *bra;* S.: *baru*) are in common use. They are about a foot in length, and are provided with two, three, or four finger holes. Beeswax is applied to the mouthpiece. They are made from a species of bamboo known by the Miskito name *bratara*.

Short 1-toned flutes are also made from the femoral bones of deer, tapir, or other large animals. They are used to lure the agouti by imitating the voice of that rodent, and from the purpose they serve are called *kyaki wasbaya* (M.), *malka kuñnin* (T.), *malaka kuñnini* (P.), or *malka kuñkana* (U.).

Several flutes are used exclusively at the festivals of the dead. A small flute (M.: *limi-mina, limi-dusa;* S.: *nawa-wakal*) is made of jaguar bone and has the mouthpiece covered with beeswax. Another short flute (M.: *yul*) is made from the thin *kliscñ* reed. Stout bamboo flutes, measuring up to 6 feet in length, with one end resting on the ground, are blown by the sukya. This instrument has a mouthpiece of bird skin and beeswax and has a number of lateral ventholes; it produces a loud noise not unlike the roaring of wild beasts.

Panpipes are unknown in the country under consideration. Pottery whistles are no longer manufactured, but a few specimens have been unearthed in the Rio Tinto (Honduras) region.

Conches (M.: *kiptaya;* S.: *masi*) are used as trumpets throughout the Mosquito Coast.

Jew's-harps (*yusap*) were introduced many years ago and are in great favor; they produce but few tones, but the music sounds sweet and soothing and has a great charm for the Indians.

MUSICAL BOW.—The musical bow (M., S.: *kuñku*), the only stringed instrument known in ancient America, produces a plaintive sound and is occasionally played by the Indian women. It is formed of a small wooden bow, chiefly of split bamboo or other tough pliable wood of 2 to 3 feet in length. Both ends of the bow are connected by a thin string of pita or silk grass. The bow is pressed against the mouth, which acts as resonator, and the string twanged by means of a pick of wood. Harrower (47) collected a large specimen on the Mosquito Coast in 1924 with a gourd for a sounding box and a string made of a heavy liana.

534 171 More complicated systems are found in other parts of Central America, but practically always among the Indians. In 1919 the writer saw at Ocotal (Nicaragua) one of these instruments in the

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hands of an Indian from the neighboring village of Cuje, who called it "quijongo" or "sambumbio." It was at least 5 feet in length and 1½ inches thick. A little from the center the string was tied back to the arc with the aid of another thread, so that two strings of unequal size were formed. This instrument could produce a great variety of tones. In Olancho (Honduras) I saw later a bow of equal size but with a calabash resonator; it was called "caramba" there. The gourd was fastened with the mouth downward at the convex surface of the arc, at the same point where the cross string had been attached to the wood, that is, about one-third the distance from one end. The Rama of Nicaragua also call this instrument *luñko*, while among the Lenca of Honduras it is known as *bumbum;* it is also found among the Kekchi of Guatemala, and was known to the Island Carib of the seventeenth century, according to De Poincy.

In spite of the fact that in Central America the musical bow is limited to the pure Indians, it is supposed to be, like all other stringed instruments, of foreign origin. The various names by which it is known in Central America savor of African origin. It is also found in certain regions of South America and has a wide distribution under different forms in large areas of Africa and Melanesia.

OTHER INSTRUMENTS.—Violins, guitars, accordions, and harmonicons may be found in certain regions; they are chiefly of German manufacture. Instead of beating the drum or shaking the rattle, the Miskito occasionally clap the hands together at the dances in order to obtain a rhythmic effect.

AMUSEMENTS: SONGS, DANCES, STORY-TELLING, GAMES, AND SPORTS

SONGS.—The Sumu rarely sing (M.: *diwanaya;* T., P.: *diwannin, diwannini;* U.: *unbdinaka*), but the Miskito sing occasionally when they are either sad or happy. All their songs are soft and plaintive, and they all sound alike to the stranger, who is unable to distinguish the gay songs from the sad ones, unless he has lived some time among the Indians. The sukyas of both tribes sing upon practicing their rites of incantation, but owing to their intermingling of many old and obscure phrases, these songs are unintelligible to the other Indians.

I was unable to collect any indigenous song, but Young, Fellechner, and Bell have been more fortunate than I. In these songs appear many phrases not used in general conversation. Fellechner (268) obtained a number of songs which were apparently composed in an antique form of the Miskito language, for the interpreters were unable to give the meaning of many parts of them. Most of this material has never been published. The following specimen is that

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
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is an elaboration of aboriginal customs, encouraged by the English. Early records indicate that the *Sumo*, *Paya*, and *Jicaque* developed similar but perhaps less complicated organizations in order to resist the Spanish Conquest. Probably they too had waged war previous to the 16th century, but available data do not permit identification of aboriginal customs.

Among the *Mosquito* and *Sumo* all men were potential warriors. They were arranged according to military ranks, which were distinguished by feather insignia. The warriors, particularly of the *Sumo*, were subject to severe tests including dietary restrictions, and they celebrated various ceremonies. Women were not permitted to attend these ceremonies, and the warriors were not supposed to have any relations with women. Before a battle shamans were consulted. The warriors, painted black, usually attacked the enemy at night. The *Mosquito* took prisoners to be sold as slaves to the Whites. The *Sumo* killed as many of the enemy as possible. They mutilated the corpses and wore the teeth and fingernails as trophies. Some of the *Sumo* reputedly ate the roasted flesh of their enemies in order to inflict further insult upon them and to make sure that they were completely destroyed.

ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Dances and music.—All ceremonies are the time for much intoxication, dancing, and singing. On frequent occasions the *Mosquito* sing in groups or singly. There are many kinds of dances, some of them specially for women and others for particular ceremonies. There are two types of drums: a goblet-shaped drum used in funeral and memorial ceremonies and a drum of European origin which is used in some of the ceremonies and, perhaps, as a signal drum. Conch-shell trumpets and reed or bone flutes with one to four stops are blown. *Sumo* and *Mosquito* shamans use flutes 6 feet (2 m.) long. The musical bow, with or without a gourd sounding box, is played by women. Gourd rattles are also used.

RELIGION

The *Sumo*, *Mosquito*, and *Paya* believe in a deity, called "Our Father," who lives in the sky. He is little interested in mankind, is too far removed to be approached by humans, and has little influence upon human affairs. The sun, moon, and stars, especially the Pleiades, are considered to be supernatural beings. They figure in the mythology and are of some significance in the religious philosophy. Solar and lunar eclipses, thunder, wind, the rainbow, and other celestial phenomena are explained by myths. The last three are the agents of the major deities.

A *Sumo* creation myth recounts the activities of two brothers who made the animals out of maize cobs. People are believed to have been made from rays of the sun. The *Paya* believe that their god sowed men in the